irregular, or to the extent herein-before required, it shall be lawful for the official referees, by their certificate, to authorise the taking down and rebuilding of one of the fronts of a building, without pulling down such timber partition, and the walls under or over the same, and building a proper party-wall in lieu thereof,' which modification being made in such rule, will, in our opinion, give effect to the purposes of the said Act: as witness our hands this first day of September, one thousand eight hundred and forty six.—(Signed)

MORPETH,
CHARLES GORE."

*** The injurious effect of the clause now modified, in respect of preventing public improvements, widening streets, &c., was pointed out in THE BUILDER soon after the passing of the Act.

THE STYLE OF THE PROPOSED NEW PALACE.

SIR,—*Blackwood's Magazine* of this month contains an excellent article, entitled, "How to Build a House and Live in it," in which the caustic pleasantries of the writer are mixed up with sound and sterling truths, worthy of all architects to bear in mind. Thus, when it is said, "a bad architect is always seeking after ornament to conceal his mistakes of construction," the remark should deter really able men from falling into the same error, lest they be classed with inferior professors, and to some of even our very greatest architects part of the reproach will still too justly apply; for, as the writer observes, "in public buildings the rage for covering blank spaces, and for getting rid of sharp edges or corners still continues;" and the danger to be feared is that profuse decoration and extensive panelling executed in stone, and sanctioned by the authority of a great name, will be copied in the quantity, but wanting the quality, in compo, or some other wretched substitute for reality. It is gratifying to me to see the sturdy cudgel of Christopher North attacking a system against which my feeble lance was hurled three years ago (letters of PHILO-TUDOR, June, 1843, in THE BUILDER), and the abominations of the *compo*-site style are still on the increase. "Mags" says, "This has been one of the curses of all architectural and ornamental art in modern times, that every thing has been imitative, fictitious, sham, make-believe; brick is stuccoed to look like stone, and fir is painted to look like oak." The following remark has great justice in it:—"Ornament, to be effective, need not be abundant,"—and the truth of the maxim, though not borne out by the general practice of men in the present day, is sufficiently tested by the works of Wren, Inigo Jones, and Chambers; indeed, the entire enriched work on the outside of St. Paul's Cathedral (over and above the actual architecture of the fabric) would hardly suffice for the front of a modern tradesman's house. One more quotation from *Blackwood*, "good stonework without, and good oak-work within, will make a house that a prince may live in," leads me to resume my remarks upon a new palace for her Majesty.

Few occasions have arisen in which so fine an opportunity has occurred of erecting a building which should do honour to our age and country, I would not so greatly care in what style the palace should be built provided that the design is produced in thorough harmony with the selected style, yet at the same time with a proper regard to the purposes for which the building is intended. Thus, if the Grecian style should be adopted, nothing would be more absurd than a fac-simile of the Parthenon, without the accessories of the Acropolis, the glorious mountains and sunny skies of Greece; if a Roman design is preferred, let us not be reminded of heathen gods and goddesses in the pediment of a Christian palace. If, on the other hand, a Gothic style of building should be chosen, let the fate of Fonthill and of other structures, whose costliness has only increased the contempt with which they are regarded, be a warning to shun the imitation of abbeys and ecclesiastical features utterly unsuitable to the purposes of a domestic building, in which fitness should be the first object.

A situation more delightful than Kensington Gardens for a palace cannot be found near London; the rare combination of wood and water, the magnificent foliage, the beautiful verdure, the commanding and isolated position, the extensive views around, make up a scene of truly English character, and whatever claims may be put forward in favour of classic styles of architecture, I still hold to the belief that some one of our own periods, not too far back, but either late Plantagenet or Tudor, will be best suited to the locality; but whatever the period chosen, the domestic and not the ecclesiastical features of the time should be introduced. Thus, how well would a Tudor building harmonize with the scenery, the "lustye bye pynacles" and towering chimneys, the expanded bay windows, and the rich oriels, "the turrets and the towers," composing a perfect picture set in the suitable framework of the "rooky wood."

Fine as the situation is, it will be utterly spoiled if the palace is made to resemble a fortress—a Windsor Castle in miniature—for machicolated towers, portcullises (except as badges), loop-holed embrasures, frowning battlements, and the stern accompaniments of a feudal castle, would be out of place in a spot where her Majesty would be surrounded by loving subjects, whose loyal and stout hearts would be her best defence. Again, disappointment will be a sure result, if, instead of an unfettered and manly adaptation of mediæval architecture, not servilely taking this "house" or that "place" for a model, we are to have a Grecianized Gothic edifice, having but few true features preserved, but in their place rejoicing in profuse panelling (which is like turning a house inside out), wearying the aching sight by its constant and monotonous repetition, sacrificing effect to richness, leaving no repose, no breadth—the voids and the solids being alike crowded with tracery, thus rendering the windows of secondary importance; and most likely such a design would be remarkable for the absence of that noblest of all Gothic features, the GABLE; the best, because the natural termination of a roof, yet so strangely lost sight of by some of our first architects; and the omission is never redeemed by the new and unlicensed introductions, of which neither the usefulness nor beauty is manifest.

It is to be hoped, however, that we shall have a palace designed in a truly English character, fitted for its truly English scene, and worthy of England and England's Queen, and one in which we may see, as delightful old Chaucer writes, who understood these matters well from his position,*

> "The chambris and parlers of a sorte,
> Ellish hir bydalowes, goodlye as may be thought,
> As for bewnesse or otherwise disport."

and the gorgeous embellishments of heraldry and stained glass adding their charm to the

> "Light byalowes throughe
> Yburnen full thikke,
> Shorn with shapen shrides."—
> *Piers Plowman.*

and all those delightful details and pleasing associations, which are found in the stately structures of the Tudor times, whose owners well knew to combine the useful with the beautiful:—

> "Building royally
> Their mansions curiously,
> Ellish turrets and with towres,
> Ellish halls and with bowres
> Stretching to the starres,
> Ellish glass windowes and barres,
> Hanging about their walls
> Clothes of golde and palles,
> Arras of rich araye,
> Strowde as flowres in Maye.—*Skelton.*

A structure, in short, such as those great builders, Cardinal Wolsey or Sir Reginald Bray, would have bequeathed to us, had they been commissioned to erect a palace on this site.

With the awful failures of the palaces at Kew, Brighton, and Pimlico, before our eyes, as works of art, it is to be hoped that an occasion of building a new palace will call forth the best energies of the architect to whom it may be confided, to whose keeping the character of his profession and the honour of his country as to the rank it holds in art, will be largely committed, and that he may, unshackled by committees of taste, be allowed to carry out what he knows to be true and beautiful, remembering that if he only endeavours to follow the fleeting taste of a day, however he may succeed in exciting the admiration of "some quantity of barren spectators," he will assuredly "make the judicious grieve;" and the profound remark of the Great Master applies to the architect as well as to the player, "the censure of which one must, in your allowance, o'erweigh a whole theatre of others."

I cannot better close this letter and my correspondence on the subject, than by a quotation which seems to apply with great propriety to the matter discussed; it is from Mr. Gwilt's admirable "Encyclopædia of Architecture." "It is almost unnecessary to observe, that the site on which a palace is to be built, must be open and free in every respect, that a large expanse of gardens should be attached to it for the use of the public as well as of the sovereign, in which respect the palaces of the Tuileries and Versailles are unparalleled. All should have a royal bearing, parsimony being inadmissible in works of this nature."

GEORGE ROBERT FRENCH.

Sussex-gardens, Hyde-park. 25 Sept. 1846.

* He was clerk of the King's works at the Palace of Westminster, and at the royal manors of Kennington, Shene, Byfleet, Clopton, the Mews at Charing, and St. George's, Windsor.

ANOTHER VIEW OF THE SAME QUESTION.

SIR,—In THE BUILDER of the 29th of August last, you ask the following questions: "Is Buckingham Palace a worthy or even an endurable habitation for a Queen of England? and, Can it be made so?"

To the first of these questions I reply, that Buckingham Palace *is not* a worthy residence for the sovereign of this country: ever since its erection it has been a complete disgrace to the nation in an architectural point of view; for whether it be taken externally in the abstract, with its most unpicturesque outline, or internally, with its inconvenient arrangements and the puerility of its details, the same feeling of pity and contempt arises in the mind of the spectator on beholding this consummate abortion of the building art, which remains an inexhaustible source of ridicule to all well informed foreigners who visit our metropolis.

To your second question—"Can it be made a suitable residence?"—I distinctly and most emphatically reply no; I defy the most skilful architect ever to make it a structure worthy the required occasion, it being perfectly and totally past all redemption; and whatever sums might be spent upon it in the way of additions and "patch-work," would inevitably be a waste of the public funds, and be completely abortive.

A sarcastic writer in the *Examiner* has the following notice on this subject: "And after all, in writing about a well-constructed royal edifice, on a proper site we have been but imagining *an impossibility*; for although there are sites enough for such a structure, *there is no architect*, and if the money for the purpose were voted, and the best ground for it chosen, the result would only be *some abomination, like an oil-cloth manufactory on a great scale*."

Now, Mr. Editor, I think you will admit, that if the remarks of this hypercritical writer are correct, the science of architecture is at a miserably low ebb, when, in this enlightened age, it is gravely asserted, in a public journal of high standing in London, that there is no architect in our country possessing the powers of erecting a building beyond the appearance of an oil-cloth manufactory on a large scale. With all due deference, however, to the keen discrimination of the writer above adverted to, I differ with him in this sweeping condemnation of the architects of the present period; for, although we are compelled, however reluctantly, to admit that it is extremely difficult to point out an *Inigo Jones*, a *Wren*, or a *Vanbrugh*, yet it would not be difficult to prove that there are several architects who possess in an eminent degree those essential attributes of superior genius, sufficient to the designing and constructing a palace of suitable magnificence for the sovereign of this great nation, which would do honour to the age in which we live, should the opportunity be granted, and the necessary means afforded.

No doubt the most important part of the transaction is the selection of an architect for such an important undertaking, which should

For more information on PDF Compression and OCR go to our website